

Introduction: The Vision of Catholic Social Thought

“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Preamble

“Social justice and social charity must, therefore, be sought. . . . [T]he institutions themselves of peoples and, particularly those of all social life, ought to be penetrated with this justice. . . . Social charity, moreover, ought to be as the soul of this order.”

Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno 88

In the face of twentieth-century horrors, from the Shoah to Rwanda, Darfur to Syria, apartheid to the factory-fire massacre in Bangladesh, the language of human rights has emerged as compelling rhetoric and framework. Our social conscience struggles with the expanding recognition of the humanity of all peoples and the ambiguity of the claims the suffering of others places upon us. The last century marked the spread of liberation movements and the enculturation of human rights. Rights are the primary framework and language for global ethics discussions within the international community. Despite ongoing and significant debates about what constitutes human rights, the concept currently commands a pride of place at the United Nations as the vocabulary and structure for addressing ethics in international debate. Development, poverty, peace building, responses to violence—the list of pressing global social concerns dependent upon the human rights project is long.

What, though, are human rights? The term is used so frequently and casually that they seem all encompassing and elusive. Who “has” them? Individuals? Communities? In popular discussion, the term *right* is broadly used to identify those services or protections one can lay claim to in society (the right

to freedom of speech, movement, education, access to health care, and so on). This text will identify a right as having three distinct elements. A right begins with a person who is the bearer of the right (subject) and includes a particular substance (object) that is claimed against another individual or group who has the correlative duty to respect this right. For example, the right to freedom of speech is a right of an individual to speak his or her mind freely without interference from other individuals or groups. Moreover, the protection of this right, the locus of the duty, is often understood in terms of the legal guarantee by the state (as part of the basic framework of law within a community). In particular, contemporary legal recognition of these rights begins with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the particular emphasis of the United Nations of codifying human rights within national and local laws.

Within human rights discourse, human rights are often pitted against any substantive understanding of the community, the common good, or solidarity. Throughout the Cold War, in particular, strong dichotomies between international treatment of civil-political rights and social, economic, and cultural rights. Globally, “Western human rights,” because of their liberal and individual emphasis, have come under fire from a variety of non-Western scholars: African, Islamic, Confucian, Buddhist, and so on. African political scientist Claude Ake argues that the liberal human rights tradition is sociologically specific and that African communities “have little interest in choice for there is no choice in ignorance. There is no freedom for hungry people, or those eternally oppressed by disease. It is no wonder that the idea of human rights has tended to sound hollow in the African context.”¹ Ake and others who critique the Western human rights tradition acknowledge that political liberties are necessary; however, they are not the ultimate goal. In addition, the individual focus of human rights is critiqued as contrary to “Asian values” that prioritize the community (this applies to African cultural critiques as well).

Answering these critiques, contemporary human rights scholars and activists have sought to reclaim the unity of the Universal Declaration of 1948 and develop the inclusive force of human rights theory. As Ake argues, “human rights will play their proper role in social development in Africa today only when they are conceived as the Universal Declaration understood them fifty years ago—as including both civil-political and social-economic rights.”²

1. Claude Ake, “The African Context of Human Rights,” in *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach*, ed. Larry May et al. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 95.

2. David Hollenbach, SJ, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights and Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 228.

One example of this shift toward an integrated approach focused on basic necessities and the community is the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Through the human development reports of the last decade, UNDP attempted to integrate the human rights project with attention to both individuals and communities—offering an integrated view of human development. Entering into this conversation, this book offers a vision of Catholic social thought as providing an understanding of human rights and solidarity in which the individual and community are respected. For Catholic social thought, human rights and solidarity cannot be at odds, as one cannot truly be present without the other. The two are intrinsically connected in the human person and mutually dependent upon one another for fulfillment.

WHAT IS CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING?

In November 2012, a fire broke out in a clothing factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, killing more than one hundred factory workers, who were working in unsafe conditions for virtually nothing.³ The fire shocked people around the world. In Bangladesh, people protested and marched, demanding safer working conditions. Around the world, petitions emerged, demanding American and European companies (Walmart and the Gap in particular) take responsibility for working conditions along their supply chain. Then, in May 2013, when asked to comment on workers protesting the lack of changes in Bangladesh, Pope Francis condemned the treatment of Bangladeshi factory workers as *slave labor* that goes against God but produces cheap goods for the developed world.⁴ It is within a similarly complex reality of exploitation, injustice, and movements for justice that modern Catholic social teaching emerged in 1891. The nineteenth century brought with it rapid social, political, philosophical, and economic changes. In particular, the rise of factories, exploitation of workers, and emergence of communism and socialism called for new social reflection. Thus, modern Catholic social teaching emerged as a response when Pope Leo XIII issued *Rerum Novarum* (*On the Condition of Labor*) in 1891.⁵ Rooted in the

3. "Dhaka Bangladesh Clothes Factory Fire Kills More than 100," *BBC News*, 25 November 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20482273>.

4. Krishnadev Calamur, "Pope Compares Bangladesh Factory Conditions to Slave Labor," *The Two-Way: Breaking News from NPR*, National Public Radio, May 1, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/05/01/180406283/pope-compares-bangladesh-factory-workers-to-slave-labor>.

5. For more on this see Jean-Yves Calvez, SJ, and J. Perrin, SJ, *The Church and Social Justice* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1961) Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891–Present: A Historical, Theological and Ethical Analysis* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002); Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, et al. *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown

long-standing tradition of Christian moral reflection, Catholic social teaching adapted and developed the church's social doctrine through direct and systematic engagement with new social problems through a series of papal encyclicals, conciliar and synodical documents, and episcopal statements. All of the popes from John XXIII to Benedict XVI have developed and emphasized Catholic social teaching through their encyclicals. While he has not yet offered a social encyclical, Pope Francis's contribution to Catholic social teaching is anticipated with great expectation. And as his statements in response to the situation of Bangladeshi factory workers indicate, the exploitation of workers and the human dignity of those on the margins of society remains as much a focus in Catholic social teaching as it did in 1891.

Frequently called Catholicism's *best kept secret*, Catholic social teaching is the church's explicit and official grappling with contemporary social problems. While initially employing faith and reason to provide moral guidance to all the faithful, beginning with Pope John XXIII, the tradition explicitly engaged not only the Catholic Church but all people of goodwill. Today, Catholic social teaching is a primary resource for the Catholic contribution to the public sphere on matters of globalization, justice, human dignity, and peace. Catholic social thought, on the other hand, refers to the reflections, analysis, and social ethics by theologians and other scholars in light of Catholic social teaching. Johan Verstraeten explains, "The Catholic social tradition can be interpreted as a tradition which comprises a particular set of shared understandings about the human person, social goods, and their distributive arrangements. This particular understanding is grounded in a living relation to the constitutive narratives provided by the Bible, integrated in a theoretical framework which makes it possible for the catholic understanding to remain open to rational explanation and public debate."⁶ This encompasses not only the Catholic theological tradition but also the work of philosophers, sociologists, economists, and the like. Catholic social thought is the broad tradition of theologians, intellectuals, activists, social movements, and others responding to the *signs of the times*. This book is an example of Catholic social thought on human rights and solidarity as they developed in the last fifty years of Catholic social teaching.

University Press, 2004)' Joe Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: The Popes Confront the Industrial Age, 1740–1958* (New York: Paulist, 2003) Jack Mahoney, SJ, *The Challenge of Human Rights: Origin, Development and Significance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); and Marvin Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third, 1998).

6. Johan Verstraeten, "Re-Thinking Catholic Social Thought as Tradition," in *Catholic Social Thought: Twilight or Renaissance?*, ed. J. S. Boswell, F. P. McHugh, and J. Vertraeten (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 64.

Over the last fifty years, this teaching has relied on two distinct yet related themes in its analysis: human rights and solidarity. Despite their prominence, the relationship between solidarity and human rights is left largely unexamined. What is the relationship between human rights and solidarity? This book aims to answer this question through a systematic investigation of recent Catholic social teaching, and it makes a constructive argument for the philosophical and theological anthropology behind the prioritization of human rights and solidarity. Human rights and solidarity do not emerge as twin pillars of Catholic social teaching by accident but because the two are intricately linked in the human person. Through the theme of integral human development and a dialogue with social analysis, this book further shows that connecting human rights and solidarity is necessary for both expanding human rights and building community. Through explicating the virtue of solidarity and its corresponding vices, this book argues that solidarity is a social virtue that is cultivated and habituated through the practice of respect for human rights. The vision of solidarity and human rights in Catholic social thought, then, contributes to and can help clarify the wider secular debates concerning the future of the human rights project, specifically broadening responsibility for human rights, clarifying and supporting the emerging responsibility to protect doctrine, and structuring just partnerships for development.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The first chapter, “Catholic Social Teaching on Human Rights and Solidarity,” examines in depth the development of human rights and solidarity over the last fifty years. Beginning with Pope John XXIII, Vatican II, and Pope Paul VI, human rights and solidarity are introduced into the tradition and quickly rise in prominence. Using personalism as his frame, Pope John Paul II develops solidarity; however, the concrete parameters of solidarity and its relationship to human rights remain unexamined. Finally, Pope Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) uses charity as its primary theological lens while maintaining the central prominence of human rights and solidarity. As Catholic social teaching develops, a defined and clear tradition of human rights emerges beside an evolving and ambiguous theology of solidarity. For the purposes of scope, this book is limited to papal social encyclicals and council and synod documents. It does not address the numerous contributions of national or regional episcopal conferences. Starting with John XXIII, Catholic social thought adapts and adopts human rights language. Its use of human rights has expanded, influenced the wider human rights tradition, and emerged as a strong, well-defined

approach. Solidarity, on the other hand, emerges slowly—as an attitude, a duty, a feeling, and finally a virtue. In contrast to most treatments of solidarity that focus only on John Paul II, this chapter places the emergence of solidarity as a virtue in John Paul II's thought within the context of what came before and after. Through a detailed examination of the insights and ambiguities of these two themes, this chapter lays the foundation for the connection of human rights to solidarity forwarded in the rest of this book.

In order to examine the relationship between human rights and solidarity, chapter 2, “Anthropological Foundations for Human Rights and Solidarity,” turns to the human person as the foundation for both human rights and solidarity. Both human rights and solidarity hinge on the view of the person—human rights require a view of the person as fundamentally linked with others, and solidarity mandates respect and promotion of human rights. The legacy of the Enlightenment—in particular, one of its heroes, Immanuel Kant—placed great emphasis on the individual and an individual understanding of rationality and autonomy. This chapter argues this is not a sufficient view of the human person for understanding human rights and solidarity. Instead, I argue, through an explication of philosophical and theological anthropology, that both human rights and solidarity are required by the integrated and relational view of the human person. Using the moral philosophy of Charles Taylor, I offer an account of socially embedded agency, freedom, and the fundamental recognition of the equal humanity of other persons as the normative basis for the person's authentic participation in community. This understanding of the person highlights a normative link between solidarity and human rights, exhibited in Taylor by the obligation to belong. Beyond the philosophy of the person, Catholic social teaching's commitment to human rights and solidarity is based on a particular theological foundation. Theologically, the link between solidarity and human rights lies within the human person as created in the image and likeness of God (*imago dei*). To be in the image and likeness of God includes our relational nature, and for Christian theology our relational nature is in the image and likeness of the Trinity. *Imago dei* then must also be *imago trinitatis*. This relationality and emphasis on community is central to our theology of the person, creation, and covenant. Using the contemporary Trinitarian theologies of Catherine Mowry LaCugna and Elizabeth A. Johnson, CSJ, this chapter argues that just as *I* am in the image of God, so too *we* are in the image of God. The relationality of the Trinity, then, is important for our understanding of solidarity. Based on the equality, mutuality, and reciprocity of the Trinity, then, we as community image God in the world—more or less fully—through living solidarity and human rights.

A common critique of Catholic social teaching is that it is naive and overly optimistic in its approach. The third chapter, “Integral Human Development, Practicality, and Social Analysis,” begins with Catholic social teaching’s approach to development. The human right to development was recognized and examined in Catholic social teaching twenty years before its addition to the United Nations canon. It is primarily a communal and not an individual right. For decades, development was not viewed through human rights but was seen purely as a matter of economics and numbers. This changed in recent decades through the theoretical work of scholars like Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and programs like the Millennium Development Goals at the United Nations. In dialogue with the social analysis of Sen and the Millennium Development Goals data, this chapter examines the capabilities, substantive freedoms, and advances made through an integrated approach to development. While it provides important context, the approach taken by Sen and the United Nations Development Programme alone is not sufficient, as it still primarily offers a functional understanding of community. Despite the great progress toward a more integrated view of development, Sen and others still lack a substantive view of the community capable of solidarity. This is precisely what the vision of Catholic social thought offers to all people of goodwill. In the pursuit of development as a human right, Catholic social teaching offers a virtue of solidarity that goes beyond treating the community as an instrument for human rights. Thus, the virtue of solidarity here enhances Sen’s understanding of human rights. The social virtue of solidarity linked to human rights and rooted in a relational anthropology is an important contribution of Catholic social thought to human rights discourse.

Returning to Catholic social teaching, chapter 4, “The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights,” provides a detailed exposition of the virtue of solidarity as habituated through the praxis of human rights. This chapter pulls together the analysis of the first three chapters by offering a constructive framework for solidarity. Focusing in detail on three levels of solidarity—as an attitude, a duty, and a virtue, which emerge from the exposition in the first three chapters—this chapter attempts to clarify and concretize Catholic social teaching’s understanding of solidarity. If solidarity is a social virtue, then what are the specific parts of the virtue? Does it have corresponding vices? And what are the practices by which individuals and communities habituate the virtue? This chapter provides a detailed theory of solidarity as a virtue and its cultivation through practicing respect for human rights. It also places solidarity in conversation with justice, a related yet distinct virtue. Furthermore, understanding solidarity as a virtue between vices provides a new interpretive

lens for situating the current focus on human rights and solidarity within the broader tradition's search for the common good and its rejection of multiple forms of individualism and collectivism.

The final chapter, "Engaging the Future of the Human Rights Project and Building Solidarity," briefly identifies how the vision of Catholic social thought detailed in this book can provide important insights for rethinking responsibility for human rights within the context of globalization. Where secular human rights discourse has focused on the individual and located responsibility primarily in the civil authority of the nation-state, the vision of Catholic social thought integrates human rights and solidarity beginning with the human person. While responsibility is located in the nation-state, the centrality of the one human family for both human rights and solidarity provides a wider framework of responsibility, which is critical for three ongoing international debates. First is the debate concerning responsibility for human rights and transnational actors. What is the responsibility of a transnational corporation or nongovernmental organization (NGO) for promoting human rights? The second is the responsibility-to-protect doctrine, which moved to the international spotlight in 2012 through the events in Libya and elsewhere. What is the responsibility of the international community for human rights when a people suffer human rights violations either at the hands of their own government or their government's inability to protect them? Finally, as development is a primary focus of the global agenda and as we move from the Millennium Development project toward new *sustainable development goals* in 2015, how do we create partnerships for development that respect human rights and build solidarity? Can a just partnership exist between developed and developing countries, groups, or NGOs?

Ultimately, this book argues that participation is absolutely crucial for both human rights and solidarity. The radical claim of Catholic social thought is not that you and I both have equal humanity or human dignity. The radical claim of Catholic social thought is that my humanity is bound up in yours. We are one, such that when your human rights are violated, my dignity is violated as well. The virtue of solidarity pushes us to build a fully human community through practicing respect for human rights. This vision can offer a significant contribution to ongoing debates about the role of community in human rights. For Catholic social thought, it is a matter of living more fully human lives in the world, to more fully seek Jesus' prayer in John's Gospel "that they may be one" (17:20-21) through our participation in the humanity of one another.